

# **PRESBYTERY OF GLACIER**

## **CODE OF ETHICS**

### **FOR TEACHING ELDERS, CREs AND OTHER CHURCH CERTIFIED PROFESSIONALS**

#### ***THE PURPOSE OF THESE GUIDELINES***

These ethical guidelines for ministerial conduct serve two purposes: (1) As a guide to what is expected professionally of teaching elders and other church certified professionals in the Presbytery of Glacier; (2) To inform the laity what they can expect from teaching elders and other church professionals (hereafter referred to as "pastors", which will also include CREs) as defined in G-2.05 in The Book of Order. It is the expectation of Presbytery of Glacier that individual sessions shall adopt standards for all of their organizations and employees.

These guidelines do not presume to speak to all areas of pastors' lives. They are minimum expectations and the pastor must also be guided by Scripture, personal conscience, The Book of Order, Christian tradition and peer approval. They assume basic honesty and integrity of conduct. Expectations of pastors and styles of behavior change. The ethical behavior of pastors is a topic which should be regularly considered, discussed, and mutually agreed upon by the members of presbytery. This code, however, does articulate certain customs and practices which have been largely accepted within the pastoral ministry profession. They are subject to regular review.

These principles are not designed to be a basis for analysis of the civil liability of those persons guided by them.

#### ***A. SOME FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES***

1. In all professional matters, pastors are to maintain practices that give glory to Christ; advance the goals of the Church; and nurture, challenge and protect the welfare of church members, parishioners, clients and the public.
2. Pastors are to act in such a manner as to uphold and enhance the honor, integrity, morality and dignity of the profession.
3. Pastors are to limit their ministries to those positions and responsibilities for which they are qualified.
4. Pastors will conduct all professional matters in a manner which assures confidentiality and avoids conflicts of interest.
5. Pastors will seek to maintain professional competency throughout their careers.
6. In personal as well as professional relationships pastors are to demonstrate honest and sincere motives evidencing respect, honesty, fairness, and humility; uphold the peace, unity and purity of the church; and share faith, hope and love with all people.

#### ***B. PASTORS AS PERSONS***

**1. PASTORS BEAR UNIOUE EXPECTATIONS.** In considering the ethics particular to ordained ministry, it is well to remember that pastors are expected to live in the same manner of faithfulness, forgiveness and obedience as are all members of Christ's church.

While all who follow Christ are subject to the same human weaknesses, nevertheless, those who are called as ordained servants are set apart with particular expectations. People expect high standards of pastors. To deny or ignore this is unrealistic and irresponsible. Pastors will show sensible regard for the moral, social and religious standards of the Christian community and the community at large, realizing that any violation on their part may be damaging to their congregants, to pastoral colleagues, to their professions and to the body of Jesus Christ.

**2. PASTORS AND FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE.** Even though the Reformed tradition emphasized the freedom of individual conscience, pastors are still bound to the discipline of the church {see The Book of Order D-1.000 – .0103, and the process as outlined in Section D, G2.0105}).

Violations of this code may be cause for disciplinary procedures.

Standards for pastoral conduct grow out of a vision of the Christian life and a sense of calling to a particular service. Like other Christians, pastors experience sin, grace, alienation, and forgiveness. Along with other Christians, they are expected by the Christian community to witness to the renewal of humanity in Christ by demonstrating in their daily lives love, compassion and respect for other persons; fidelity in marriage; responsibility in parenthood and other family obligations; joy in service; and integrity and trustworthiness in all their dealings with others.

**3. THE CARE OF PASTORS.** Pastors also need pastoral care. They should take the initiative in establishing relationships with other pastors, with the Presbytery Executive and with the Committee on Ministry to provide support in difficult times, caring concern, encouragement for Christian growth, and sharing in both successes and failures.

**4. PASTORS AND FEES, HONORARIA AND DISCOUNTS.** Pastors should ordinarily not require or solicit fees for pastoral services to families or individuals within the congregation. Such services include, but not limited to, performing baptisms, marriages, funerals and counseling. In those cases in which an unsolicited gift is given pastors may use their own best judgment as to what to do with the gift. All pastors stand ready to render services to individuals and communities in crisis without regard to financial remuneration. While fees for the use of the church facilities are set by the session, honoraria or fees for the pastor's services to non-members can be set by the pastor in consultation with the session. The pastor must be aware of and responsible to Civil authorities regarding the possible tax consequences of receipt of honoraria, gifts, or other forms of remuneration.

**5. PARTICIPATION IN NON-PARISH ACTIVITIES.** Though pastors are expected to participate in presbytery, ecumenical and other activities beyond the particular church, it is wise for the pastor to discuss the time involved in such activities with the session.

(Discussion does not mean "seeking permission," as pastors are expected to participate in the governing bodies of the church by virtue of their ordination vows, G-2.0503a).

If any honoraria are received for duties outside the particular church (such as speaking, lecturing or teaching), and these duties are carried on during time which would otherwise be understood as available to the congregation, a common understanding between the pastor and the session should be established as to the disposition of such honoraria. This presupposes agreement between the pastor and session concerning the limits of the congregation's claim on the pastor's time. Conversation between pastors and their sessions should arrive at concurrence as to expectations regarding the pastor's work

time and free time.

### ***C. PASTORS AND THE PRESBYTERY***

**1. THE PASTOR AND COLLEAGUES.** Whenever a colleague's conduct is believed to be harmful to any individual or group, including that person himself or herself, the concerned person should speak directly to that colleague or consult the presbytery executive or the chairperson of the Committee on Ministry. Anyone registering a concern with regard to the behavior of a colleague will be required to make her or his own identity known.

**2. THE PASTOR AND THE NON-MEMBER.** Pastors are sometimes called upon to officiate at weddings and funerals for persons who are not members of the congregation. It is appropriate in such situations to ascertain if these persons belong to a particular church. If so, it is appropriate to ask why they are not requesting their pastor to officiate. If the pastor agrees to officiate, inform the pastor of the non-member.

**3. THE PASTOR AND OTHER CHURCHES.** Ordinarily pastors should not knowingly call upon members of another church in the community to administer pastoral care unless the initiative and interest shown by such a person requires it as a courtesy. If such a visitation occurs, it is a helpful courtesy, after obtaining the parishioner's permission, to inform the colleague to whose church the person belongs regarding visitation. Marriages, funerals and baptisms are not to be accepted by pastors unless an invitation has been extended by the Session.

**4. THE PASTOR AND THE MULTIPLE STAFF.** All pastors are installed in their positions by action of presbytery and any change in the pastoral relationship must be approved by presbytery. While the pastor serves as head of staff in a congregation and bears the responsibility which this implies, the spirit within the staff should be that of a shared ministry where all bring their particular gifts to the work of ministry. To this end, everyone should be understanding of the mistakes of colleagues and seek to give support and help when needed. Care should be taken to avoid inappropriate criticism, negative suggestions and innuendo. It is not appropriate to attempt to seek to ally other church members and/or coworkers in disagreements.

All staff members, remunerated or not, are given equal respect without regard to sex, race, ethnic origin, disability, or marital status.

**5. THE PASTORS IN AN INSTALLED OR TEMPORARY RELATIONSHIP.** The purpose of an installed or temporary pastor is to provide pastoral service and to prepare a particular congregation for new pastoral leadership (see the Book of Order, G-2.0504a, G-2.0504b) Under no circumstances should an interim pastor become involved in the work of the pastor nominating committee beyond preparation of the Church Information Form. Presbytery representatives should make this policy clear to the congregation at the time the congregation elects a pastor nominating committee.

**6. THE PASTOR AND THE SUCCESSOR.** When a pastor accepts another call, the pastor should exercise due care not to influence directly or indirectly the policies of the successor. Visits to one's former parish shall be avoided. Even if occasional visits occur, it is a courtesy to pay one's respects to one's successor and to inform the successor about the nature and purpose of the visit. During the period of installed or temporary supply, the former pastor should avoid performing pastoral services (weddings, funerals, baptisms, etc) in relation with the former congregation. Moreover, even when a

successor issues an invitation to a former pastor to assist or take part in a pastoral function, it is a wise idea for the former pastor to take the initiative in a candid discussion with the successor about the propriety of such functioning and the possible harmful effects on the life of the congregation in terms of its new ministry. One reasonable and workable rule of thumb is for a former pastor to make clear to former parishioners that the former pastor would accept an invitation of the present pastor only to assist the present pastor in a pastoral function. In any case, regarding all such situations, the former and present pastors should seek the advice and approval of the current session of the church. If misunderstandings arise in these areas, it is appropriate for the former and present pastors to seek the counsel of presbytery's Committee on Ministry.

Should congregations bestow honorary titles, such as Pastor Emeritus, on a former or retiring pastor to recognize the pastor's service with the congregation, these former and retiring pastors shall conduct themselves in the same manner as outlined above.

**7. THE PASTOR AND THE PREDECESSOR.** If the former pastor or retired pastor bears primary responsibility for making clear that the ministry in a given location should be directed to the future rather than to the past, it is the primary responsibility of the successor or the currently installed pastor to show respect and gratitude for the heritage of that church and for the positive work of the predecessor. Ordinarily it is wise for the successor to take the initiative in making contact with a predecessor to discuss the mission and work of the church. There may be occasions when it is appropriate to invite a predecessor to return to the church for a visit, possibly to celebrate a special occasion or event or, if deemed appropriate by all concerned, to assist in a pastoral function.

**8. THE PASTOR AND RETIREMENT.** The above discussions (#s 6 & 7) are relevant for the retired pastor, but some additional matters also require comment. Sometimes a retired pastor remains within the boundaries of presbytery and sometimes within proximity to a former church. This can create problems both for the successor and for the retired pastor. This should be a matter for serious discussion by the session of the local church and presbytery's Committee on Ministry. Perhaps most important is for all concerned to recognize some fundamental professional priorities, namely: (a) that the local church and its new ministry should be uppermost in everybody's mind; (b) that the new ministry will probably develop new directions and should be encouraged in freedom to do so; (c) that there will be a natural tendency for some in the church to resist change and that it is very important for the successor and the retired pastor to deal with this resistance by reiterating with love and understanding that the mission of the church should be oriented to the future rather than the past.

The retired pastor who still remains within the bounds of presbytery or in proximity to the local church bears primary responsibility for making these priorities known. Moreover, the retired pastor should make it entirely clear that "retired" means "withdrawn from active service," at least in that location. There may naturally be misunderstandings about these matters, and there may be occasions when the line between "old friend" and "parishioner" will be unclear. In all such cases of ambiguity, again it is the retired pastor who bears primary responsibility for making clear what "retired" means.

One obvious way to ease the potential friction in such situations is for the retired pastor and the family involved to relocate to a residence some distance away from the former parish and to become active in another church in a non-professional role; economically, however, moving

may not always be feasible. Another way to deal with such situations is for the retired pastor to have candid conversation with the installed pastor regarding their mutual feelings in terms of collegial interaction. Where there is a difference of opinion, the retired pastor should defer to the installed pastor with respect to collegiality in that location. In the case of lack of agreement or uncertainty, it is appropriate for either pastor to seek the guidance of the Committee on Ministry.

**9. PROFESSIONAL AND VOLUNTEER STAFF.** All pastors who do not fall into the category of The Book of Order's installed teaching elders are expected to be active in the life of a particular congregation while respecting the position of installed pastors regarding all ministerial functions within the community. Counselors should also refer to their own code of ethics.

These pastors may administer the sacraments only at the request of the minister or session concerned, or by permission of the presbytery.

#### ***D. ETHICAL ISSUES OF PARTICULAR CONCERN***

**1. PASTORS AND CONFIDENTIALITY.** Ministers shall not disclose confidences to anyone except when:

- a. required to do so by laws of the State of Montana.
- b. disclosure is consented to by the person communicating confidences, which consent is normally given in writing.
- c. disclosure is necessary to prevent the person from harming himself or herself or others. Harmful behavior is that which is a violation of law or poses a threat to the physical well being of the self or others.
- d. disclosure is necessary to defend a pastor against claims made by a person who asserts that particular communications related to the claim were made in confidence.

**2. PASTORS AND SPECIAL PRIVILEGES.** Pastors, as servants of the Servant of God, need to be sensitive to the danger of any use of the authority of the pastoral office for personal benefit. Boundaries should be set, in consultation between the pastor, the session and the Committee on Ministry to determine how much and in what manner a pastor may promote among the members of the congregation any of the pastor's private business endeavors, tours or products. The same consultation should occur concerning the pastor's private use of church resources, business machines, secretarial time, etc.

**3. BUSINESS AND FINANCE.** The pastor's integrity in personal business and financial dealings is also an ethical concern. Pastors are expected to conduct their financial affairs with the utmost integrity. Many pastors manage discretionary funds on behalf of the congregation. It is suggested that the pastor identify someone in the congregation or presbytery to audit the use of this money. This suggestion is made to protect the pastor both from the temptation to use the funds unwisely and from rumors in the congregation about his/her misuse of the funds. Pastors are not to solicit clergy discounts for merchandise or services rendered them.

**4. THE PASTOR AND THE CIVIL LAW.** The pastor shall obey the civil law and insist leaders and members of his/her congregation do likewise. This includes, but is not limited to, matters related to taxes, copyrights, insurance, marriages, and the keeping of records.

There may be times when the pastor affirms the necessity of civil disobedience for moral reasons. Whether this is done alone or in conjunction with others (including officers and

members of the congregation), it shall be done openly and with a willingness to accept the consequences of the law. However, in such cases no moral justification for violence against another person or property is acceptable.

**5. PREACHING AND WRITING.** The pastor's public preaching, teaching and writing shall always be their own with appropriate academic acknowledgment. In sermons this includes the exegetical work, the organization and the words of the sermon, and the use of examples and illustrations.

**6. LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOR.** The pastor shall recognize their unique position in the eyes of the congregation. It is a position of trust. This position shall not be abused through misuse of pastoral authority. In visits, counseling sessions, or other contacts with members of the congregation, the pastor shall maintain strict boundaries. Pastors shall not treat persons arbitrarily based on their gender, race, nationality, age, physical, emotional or mental condition, sexual orientation, or economic condition. (Refer to the Glacier Presbytery Sexual Misconduct & Prevention Policy.)

Pastors shall avoid discriminatory or harassing treatment of any person or group. Pastoral language shall not include slurs or other verbal conduct relating to gender, race, etc., which has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Sexual harassment shall not take place. This includes but is not limited to verbal or non-verbal behavior such as sexist remarks, demeaning statements relating to gender, pressure for sexual activity and threats of punishment or promises of rewards for sexual behavior. Sexual abuse of, or misconduct with, a congregational member shall be understood as strictly forbidden. The professional has the responsibility to set the boundaries and to maintain them. Due to the issues of power and trust involved, it is recommended that single pastors or professional church workers not date members of their congregations. The same is true for presbytery staff members regarding the members of committees or other groups they staff. These provisions shall include pastors of presbytery who are involved as teachers, counselors, or supervisors in programs which train for special work in ministry, e.g., Clinical Pastoral Education or Spiritual Development.

As professionals, pastors are aware of the variation in spiritual and psychological dynamics at work in a person. Where the pastor himself or herself feels compulsions to behavior which is either criminal or unethical he or she will seek immediate help from an appropriate counselor. This standard shall apply to those caught in substance, drug, or alcohol abuse or addiction. If therapy or counseling seems to be unfruitful the pastor shall lay aside the office of ministry.

**7. THE PASTOR AND RUMORS.** Pastors may find themselves the subject of rumors in the congregation or community. Response to these shall be carefully considered. No action including verbal response shall be taken without consultation with the Session or an appropriate committee of a higher governing body. The goal of whatever action taken shall be to end such rumors; hostile action toward the bearer of such rumors endangers the life of the congregation as well as the spiritual or emotional health of the perpetrator. It is not acceptable.

#### ***E. CIRCULATION OF ETHICAL STANDARDS***

Presbytery of Glacier shall circulate this code of ethics among its member churches and

minister members. Each minister shall submit a signed statement (Appendix A attached) certifying he/she has read the code of ethics, is aware of the standards of the presbytery, and shall make a sincere, good faith effort to abide with both the spirit and content of this code of ethics.

Pastors who do not sign and return this Code of Ethics will be subject to unpaid administrative leave 30 days from date of the mailed postmark.

#### ***J. ETHICAL COUNSELORS***

Presbytery of Glacier will appoint a number of its members to serve as counselors, or assist in seeking professional counselors in understanding and fulfilling these standards. These counselors will not be members of the presbytery's staff.

#### ***G. VIOLATIONS AND SANCTIONS***

The presbytery considers that fidelity to these standards enhances the peace, unity and purity of the church. Violations of these standards may be viewed as a breaking of ordination vows and subject to the disciplinary processes of The Book of Order [of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America].

#### ***H. CANDIDATES AND INQUIRERS***

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall circulate these standards to its inquirers and candidates for the ministry. It shall make clear that these standards apply also to those under its supervision.

#### ***I. CONCLUSION AND RATIONALE***

Central to the vocation of Minister of Word and Sacrament is leadership of the people of God in a peculiarly Christian lifestyle which has at its core the embodiment of Jesus' words in John 15: 12: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you," These ethical standards are an attempt, not at setting legalistic limitations but rather guiding us all in showing the kind of love for each other that Christ has shown. So may all be encouraged to live in such a manner to promote the health and growth of the Church, and give glory to God in Jesus Christ.

*Adapted from: National Capital Presbytery Code of Ethics for Clergy and Church Professionals (1/24/95)*

Redrafted: 060116

**Appendix A**  
**PRESBYTERY OF GLACIER**  
**CODE OF ETHICS**  
**FOR TEACHING ELDERS, CRES, AND OTHER CHURCH CERTIFIED PROFESSIONALS**

I certify I have read the Code of Ethics of the Presbytery of Glacier stating the standards of the presbytery and will make a sincere, good-faith effort to abide with both its spirit and content.

**Signatures of Agreement:**

\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor Date

\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
C.O.M. Moderator Date